Letter Seven

Plato to the intimates[1] and comrades of Dion: Do well!

You [pl] sent a letter saying I need to believe that your [pl] intention is the same as that which Dion also had, and you [pl] directed me more-
324a over to join in common [with you], insofar as I am able, in deed and in speech. If you [pl] have the same opinion and desire as him, I grant that I will join in common [with you]; otherwise, I will deliberate at length.[2] But as to what his intention and desire were, I could speak as someone who is hardly conjecturing but rather knows clearly. For, when I arrived at Syracuse in the beginning, I was about forty years old, and Dion was at the age at which Hipparinus[3] is now; and the opinion of which he

1. As a rule, I have translated the word *oikeioi* as "intimates." The word literally refers to ones with whom one shares a household, and thus often specifically to family members (as it does sometimes in the *Letters*). However, Plato clearly uses the word in some cases to refer to a broader class of very close relationships (e.g., 313d2).

2. Lit. "often" (*pollakis*).

3. Three men connected to the Syracusan royal family were named Hipparinus: Dion's father, Dion's son, and Dion's nephew. There has been considerable debate as to which of the latter two men Plato is referring to here; see, e.g., Nails 2002, 166–68; Burnyeat and Frede 2015, 187–88n143; Harward 1932, 195–96; Post 1930b; Brisson 1993, 211–12n7; Souilhé 1931, xlv–xlvii. Of the two candidates, only Dion's son would have been of such an age as to match Plato's description (around twenty years old in about 354 BCE). The primary difficulty is that this Hipparinus is said by Plutarch (*Dion* 55.2) and Nepos (*Dion* 6) to have committed suicide

324b then took hold was the same one he continued holding to the end: he supposed that the Syracusans should be free, dwelling under the best laws. So it will be in no way amazing if some one of the gods should make this man too [i.e., Hipparinus] come to be of the same mind with the other's opinion about their regime. As for the way of [the opinion's] coming to be, it is not unworthy of being heard for him who is young and him who is not young, and I will attempt to go through it for you [pl] from the beginning; for now is a propitious moment.

When I was young, I underwent the same thing as many do: I supposed that, as soon as I should become my own master,[4] I would engage
324c straightaway in the common affairs of the city. And certain strokes of fortune from among the affairs of the city befell me, such as the following. The regime of that time being reviled by many, there came to be a change, and from the change fifty-one men came to the fore as magistrates, eleven in the town and ten in the Piraeus—each group to manage as many things as were needed concerning the agora and the things
324d in the districts—and they set up thirty rulers over everything as rulers with full powers.[5] Of these some happened to be intimates and acquaintances of mine, and they straightaway called upon me as toward my own

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shortly before Dion himself was assassinated, in which case he could never have been alive at the time of the writing of Letter Seven. The other candidate, Dion's nephew, was a more noteworthy historical figure. This Hipparinus was the son of Dionysius the Elder and went on himself to become the leader of Dion's party, winning back rule over Syracuse from Dion's murderer Callippus and ruling the city as a tyrant himself for two years (Diodorus Siculus 16.36). But he was some ten years too old to match Plato's description here. Those who say that Plato could never have been ignorant either of the suicide of Dion's son or of the age of Dion's nephew allege that the reference to Hipparinus at 324a7 gives away the author of Letter Seven as a forger—some adding that neither Hipparinus was deserving of the hopeful description at 324b3–4. Others, defending the letter's authenticity, have thought it plausible either that Plato might not have received word of the younger Hipparinus's untimely death or that he might have become confused as to the elder Hipparinus's age. Of course, it may also be that the confusion in chronology lies with the sources of Plutarch's and Nepos's biographies. Nor is it impossible, though I consider it unlikely, that Plato was intentionally feigning ignorance of the death of Dion's son. Letter Eight also appears to have been written under the impression that Dion's son was still alive (355e5).

4. Lit. "authority" or "sovereign"; see n. 19 to Letter Two.

5. Plato refers here to what is known as the regime of the Thirty Tyrants, which ruled Athens for eight months after its defeat in the Peloponnesian War in 404 BCE. Plato's account of the Thirty here is unusual in several respects, beginning with his reference to the broader group of "fifty-one" rulers as opposed to the most infamous "Thirty"; for parallels, see Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution* 35 and Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.54. Furthermore, Plato gives a notably softened and even biased account of the Thirty's rise to power by attributing it to a "change" (*metabolē*) in the previously "reviled" regime and not to the victorious Spartans' imposition upon their defeated foes (see Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution.* 34; cf. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.2.20, 23; 2.3.1–3, 11). The strangeness of this account has been noted by Richards (1911, 278–79).

proper affairs. And it was no wonder what I underwent, on account of my youth; for I supposed that they would manage the city by leading it from a certain unjust life to a just way, so that I was intently focusing my mind upon them as to what they would do. But then, seeing these men in a short time show the previous regime to have been golden—both in
324e other matters and, especially, when they sent a man who was my friend, the elderly Socrates, whom I would scarcely be ashamed to say was the most just of those in that time, with some others, to carry off one of the
325a citizens by force to be put to death, in order that he should participate in their affairs whether he should wish to or not—but he did not obey, but risked suffering everything rather than become a partner in their impious deeds[6]—seeing distinctly all these things and still others such as these that weren't slight, I was disgusted and I withdrew myself from the evils of that time.

It was not a long time before the affairs of the Thirty and the whole regime of that time fell; and once again, though more slowly, neverthe-
325b less the desire to be active in the common and political things began to draw me. Well, many things were happening in these times too, troubled as they were, with which one would be disgusted, and it was in no way anything amazing that, in times of change, some came to impose great vengeful penalties on some of their enemies; yet those who then returned [from exile] employed great decency indeed. But by some fortune, some of those in power again brought this comrade of ours, Socrates, into
325c court, laying a most impious accusation against him and one that was proper least of all with respect to Socrates. For these brought him in on grounds of a lack of pious veneration, and others condemned and killed him—he who had formerly not been willing to participate in the impious arrest of one of the friends of those in exile at the very time when they themselves were in exile and suffering bad fortune.

I was examining both these things and the human beings who were doing the political things, and also the laws and customs, and the more I carefully examined and advanced in age, the harder it appeared to me
325d to be to manage the political things correctly. For one is not able to act without men who are friends and faithful comrades—and these were not already there and easy to find, for our city was no longer being managed according to the ways and practices of our fathers, and it was impossible to acquire other, new [friends and comrades] with any ease—and both

6. A reference to the arrest of Leon of Salamis, an episode known to us especially from Plato's *Apology of Socrates* 32c3–e1; cf. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.38–39.

the written laws and the customs were being corrupted and increas-
325e ing to such an amazing degree that, while at first I had been full of a great impulse toward doing the common things, when I looked at these things and saw them being borne about everywhere in every way, I ended up becoming dizzy; and though I did not leave off examining in what way something better might ever come to be, both concerning these
326a very things and moreover concerning the whole regime, yet with respect to acting I was always waiting for propitious moments, and ended up thinking, concerning all of the cities now, that all of them are being governed badly—for what is of their laws is in a nearly incurable state without some amazing artifice[7] together with fortune—and I was compelled to say, praising correct philosophy, that on the basis of this it is possible to see distinctly both the just political things and all in private matters;
326b therefore the human tribes[8] will not cease from evils until either the tribe of those philosophizing (correctly and truly, that is) should come into the positions of political rule, or that of those who are in power in the cities should, by some divine fate, really philosophize.[9]

Having this intention, I went to Italy and Sicily—when I arrived the first time. But when I got there, the life that is there called happy, one full of Italiote[10] and Syracusan tables,[11] was agreeable to me in no way or manner—to live, stuffing oneself twice a day, never going to bed alone
326c at night, and all the practices that accompany this life; for neither could anyone of the human beings under heaven, practicing these customs from youth, ever be capable of becoming practically wise—there will be no blending by nature that is so amazing—nor would one ever go on to become moderate; and the same speech would hold, moreover, for the rest of virtue, and no city could be at rest under any laws whatso-
326d ever where men suppose that they need to spend away everything on excesses, and hold moreover that they need to become idle in everything except for feasts, drinking-bouts, and the serious toil of the Aphroditean

7. Lit. "preparation" (*paraskeuēs*).

8. "Tribes" translates the plural of *genos*, which can have the meaning of "family" or "stock," though it is evident enough even in this passage that it can also mean merely a "kind" or "group," as in the English "genus." "Classes" might well be the best translation here, if it were not apt to be misconstrued as indicating a socioeconomic class or caste.

9. This whole passage is an unmistakable reference to, and must be carefully compared with, *Republic* 473c11–e2; see also 499a11–d6.

10. Italiotes were the Greek inhabitants of Italy.

11. Morrow (1962) notes ad loc. that "Syracusan tables were proverbial," and refers to Plato, *Republic* 404d, as well as Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 527d.

things;[12] and it is by necessity that these cities never cease changing—tyrannies, oligarchies, and democracies[13]—and those in power in them won't put up with hearing the name of a regime of justice and equality under the law.

Having these things in mind, in addition to those from before,[14]
326e I crossed into Syracuse, perhaps by fortune, but it's likely that, by some one of the mightier ones contriving,[15] a beginning was then laid down of the problems that have now come to be concerning Dion and of those concerning the Syracusans—and, it is to be dreaded, of still more, unless you would now obey my counsel, given now for the second time.

327a In what way, then, do I mean that my arrival in Sicily at that time came to be a beginning of everything? I'm afraid that, having come to be together at that time with a young Dion, revealing to him through speeches the things that seemed to me to be best for human beings and counseling him to do them, I was ignorant that I, without noticing myself, was in a certain way contriving what would come to be a dissolution of a tyranny. For Dion being indeed very much a good learner, about other things too but especially the speeches that were then spo-
327b ken by me,[16] he hearkened keenly and intently such as none of the young I have ever met,[17] and was willing to live the rest of his life in a manner differing from that of the many Italiotes and Siceliotes,[18] having come to cherish virtue more than pleasure and the rest of luxury; from which point he led his life, until the event of Dionysius's death, in a manner that was rather aggravating to those living according to what is lawful convention in a tyranny.

327c After this, he had in mind that this intention,[19] of which he himself took hold from correct speeches, would never have come to be in

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12. I.e., sexual activity.

13. The phrase might also mean "never cease changing between tyranny, democracy, and oligarchy."

14. The word for "having in mind" is *dianooumenos*, which I have tried to render "intending" as much as possible. See n. 5 to Letter Three. Plato seems to refer back in this sentence to the *dianoia*, "intention," he had in mind in traveling to Sicily in the first place at 326b5.

15. The gender of *tōn kreittonōn* is ambiguous. It could refer to "the mightier people" or "gods," or if it is neuter, to "the mightier things."

16. The reading of one of the two best manuscripts. The other reads "the speeches that then came into being from me."

17. "Met" translates *prosetuxon*, which is related to *tuchē*, "fortune"; see n. 12 to Letter Four.

18. I.e., the Greek inhabitants of Italy and Sicily, as noted above (n. 32 to Letter Three and n. 10 above)

19. "He had in mind" and "intention" translate the related words *dianoēthē* and *dianoian*; see n. 5 to Letter Three.

him alone, but he apprehended that he saw it coming to be in others too—not in many, but it was coming to be in some, and he held that even Dionysius could perhaps become one of these with the assistance of gods, and if such a thing should in turn come to pass, that both his life and that of the other Syracusans would turn out to become one of indomitable bliss.[20] In addition to these things, he supposed that
327d I needed to come, by every means, to Syracuse as quickly as possible as a partner in these things, remembering how easily his and my intercourse had succeeded in bringing him to a desire for the noblest and best life;[21] and if he could now accomplish in Dionysius what he was undertaking, he had great hopes of establishing, without slaughters, deaths, and the evils that have now come to be, a happy and true[22] life throughout the whole land.

Correctly intending these things, Dion persuaded Dionysius to send for me, and he himself sent to me begging that I come as quickly as
327e possible by every means, before some others encountered Dionysius and turned him away to a life other than the best one. And he begged by saying the following things, though speaking at even greater length: "What propitious moments are we waiting for," he said, "greater than those that have now come to be at hand by some divine fortune?" He
328a went through the imperial rule over Italy and Sicily and his power in it, and Dionysius's youth and desire for philosophy and education, saying that he was intent on this, that his nephews[23] and intimates would easily be called toward the reason and life of which I am always speaking and would be most sufficient to join in calling Dionysius toward the same, so that, now if ever, there was every hope of bringing to completion the outcome that philosophers and rulers of great cities would be the same.

328b These and other such encouragements were very numerous, but as for my own opinion, on one hand I was fearful as to the way in which

20. "Indomitable" translates *amēchanon*, which is related to the word I have usually translated by a form of the word "contrive." The literal sense is something like "against which no contrivance could prevail."

21. "Noblest and best" translates *kallistou te kai agathou*, the superlative form of *kalos te kai agathos*, "noble and good." (see n. 21 to Letter Two on the meaning of *kalos*). The contracted form *kalos k'agathos* is a formula that refers to a morally and civically upstanding member of the Greek political community; it is often translated "gentleman." There is only one other use of this phrase in the *Letters*, at 359b7–8. The phrase is important in Platonic philosophy generally; see, e.g., *Apology of Socrates* 21d1–8 in context as well as *Alcibiades* 114e7–116b1.

22. Or "truthful" (*alēthinon*).

23. "The masculine noun [*adelphidous*] may well be generic, so that it includes Dion's nieces" (Burnyeat and Frede 2015, 146n25).

things would ever come to be concerning the young—for the desires of such as them are flighty and are often borne into their opposites—but on the other hand I knew,[24] concerning the character of Dion's soul, that it was by nature weighty and that it had already reached its middle age. Hence, though I was examining and waffling as to whether I must go and hearken or else what, nevertheless the need [to go] prevailed:[25] if ever
328c someone was going to undertake to bring these intentions concerning both laws and regime[26] to completion, it must be attempted also now; for if I should sufficiently persuade just one, I would be achieving all good things.

With this intention and daring, then, I set out from home—not in the way that some were opining, but ashamed of myself in the highest degree lest I should ever seem to myself to be altogether, solely, and artlessly a certain speech,[27] voluntarily taking hold of not one deed ever,
328d and to be in danger of betraying, in the first place, the guest-friendship and comradeship of Dion, who had really come to be in no small dangers. Whether indeed he should suffer something, or whether, having been thrown out by Dionysius and his other enemies, he should come to us in exile and ask, "Plato, I have come to you as an exile, not needing hoplites,[28] nor having come to be in need of cavalrymen for defense against enemies, but of speeches and persuasions, by means of which, as I myself have known,[29] you most of all are capable on every occasion of setting up young human beings in friendship and comradeship with each other by turning them toward the good things and the just
328e things; it is out of need for these things from your side that I am here now, having left Syracuse behind. Now, what pertains to me carries

24. Or "I knew scientifically" (*ēpistamēn*); see n. 5 to Letter Five.

25. There is a connection, difficult to render in consistent idiomatic English, between the words I have translated "waffling" and "prevailed" in this sentence. The former, *distazonti* ("doubting," "hesitating"), is literally a "dripping" on both sides of something (*dis-* = "both" + *stazein* = "to drip, trickle"). The latter, *errepse* ("inclined," "preponderated"), has as its primary meaning "tipped the scale." Plato's image, then, is of a balance in which his two options were being weighed; initially, his considerations gave equal weight to each side, but finally the scale was tipped in favor of departure to Syracuse.

26. It should be noted that *Laws* and *Regime* (usually translated *Republic*) are the titles of Plato's two longest books and the two that most explicitly and extensively describe purportedly ideal and philosophically informed political communities.

27. "Speech" translates *logos*, which could also be rendered "argument" or "reason." Its contrast in this sentence with "deed" (*ergou*) is a common one. In idiomatic English, we might say, "all talk and no action."

28. Heavy-armed foot soldiers, who would compose the core of a typical polis's army.

29. Or "as I myself have known scientifically" (*ēpistamēn*); see n. 5 to Letter Five.

relatively little reproach for you; but philosophy, which you always extol and which you claim is held in dishonor by the rest of human beings—how has it not been betrayed at this point, together with me, insofar as a
329a part of what has come to pass was up to you? And if we happened to be dwelling in Megara,[30] surely you would have come to my aid on account of the things for which I was calling upon you, or else you would hold yourself to be pettiest[31] of all; but as it is, do you suppose that by blaming the length of the journey and the magnitude of the sailing and of the toil you will ever escape a reputation for vice? Far from it,[32] indeed."—if these things had been said, what decorous answer would I have to them? There isn't [one].

329b But I went, in accordance with reason and in justice as much as can be for a human being, and because of such things I left behind my occupations, which were not indecorous, [to go live] under a tyranny that didn't seem to be fitting with respect to my things[33] or to me. In going, I both acquitted[34] myself in relation to Zeus Xenios[35] and rendered the philosopher's part unimpeachable—it would have come to be a matter of reproach had I participated in shamefulness and vice by in any way becoming soft and being cowardly.

But when I went (for there is no need to go on at length) I found
329c everything around Dionysius full of strife and slanders about Dion in relation to the tyranny. To be sure, I was defending him to the extent I was capable, though I was able to do only small things, but in about the fourth month, Dionysius, accusing Dion of plotting against the tyranny, put him in a small boat and cast him out in dishonor.

Indeed, after this we friends of Dion were all fearful lest Dionysius should avenge himself upon someone by accusing him of being an accomplice in Dion's plot; and a certain speech concerning me even got around among the Syracusans to the effect that I had been put to death

30. A city some twenty-five miles from Athens.

31. Or "paltriest," as I otherwise try to render words related to *phaulos*.

32. Lit. "there would be need of much." The main verb, *deēsei*, is related to the words for "need" and "lack" that appear in this same passage.

33. The best manuscripts include the word *logois* in the margins here, suggesting the reading "didn't seem to be fitting with respect to my speeches or to me." But it is not clear whether the marginal note indicates a preferable reading from other manuscripts since lost or merely a later scribe or editor's explanatory gloss on the text.

34. *Ēleutherōsa*, which is literally "I freed," as in "freed from blame" and hence "acquitted," or indeed "freed from debt."

35. "Xenios" is an epithet of Zeus indicating his responsibility for overseeing, and punishing transgressions of, the obligations of *xenia*, "guest-friendship"; see n. 12 to Letter Three.

by Dionysius on the grounds that I was to blame for all the things that
329d had happened up to that point. But he, perceiving that we all were disposed this way and fearing lest something greater should come to be from our fears, began to pick back up with everyone in a friendly manner; and with respect to me in particular, he was reassuring me, directing me to take heart, and begging me in every way to stay; for my fleeing from him would come to be no beautiful thing for him, but rather my staying, wherefore he pretended to beg very intently indeed. But we know that
329e the begging[36] of tyrants is mixed with compulsions, and he contrived to prevent my sailing away by bringing me into the acropolis and settling me whence not a single ship captain would any longer lead me out—not that Dionysius was [actively] preventing this; rather, not unless he himself should give the order[37] by sending someone with directions to lead me out was there a merchant, or a single one of the officers ruling at the land's exits, who, if they knew that I was leaving alone, wouldn't have seized me straightaway and led me back again to Dionysius, especially
330a since it had already been proclaimed at some point, contrary to before, how amazingly fond Dionysius was of Plato.

So then, what indeed was the state of things? For one needs to explain the truth. While he did grow ever fonder of me as time went on during his intercourse with my way and character, he also wished for me to praise him more than Dion and to hold him to be more especially[38] a friend than him, and he had an amazing love of victory with regard to such a thing. But as for the way in which it might have come to be
330b that way (if indeed it was to come to be that way) most nobly—in learning from and listening to speeches concerning philosophy, to become familiar[39] with me and come to be together with me—he shrank from it, fearing, on account of the slanderers' speeches, lest he should become ensnared in some way and Dion come to accomplish everything for himself. But I endured everything, guarding the first intention with which

36. I have translated *deēseis* here with the word "begging," since it is related to the verb *deō*, "I beg," which appears several times in the surrounding text. Elsewhere, I have rendered the noun *deēsis* with the English "entreaty."

37. A rare case in the *Letters* in which the verb *epistellein*, which I usually render with the phrase "to send a letter," means instead "to give an order"; see n. 43 to Letter Two. Of course, it is possible even here that Plato is describing Dionysius sending his messenger with a written letter.

38. "Especially" translates *diapherontōs*, which I usually translate with some form of the word "different," "distinguished," or "surpassing" (or, in other contexts, "conflict").

39. *Oikeiousthai* might be translated "become an intimate of," to render the word's relationship to *oikeios*, which I have translated as "intimate"; see n. 1 above.

I had arrived in case he should somehow come to a desire for the life of philosophy; but he, resisting, won out.

330c And the time of my first visit and occupation in Sicily came out thus, because of all these things. And after this I voyaged back, and returned when Dionysius sent for me in all seriousness. As to why, and how many things I did, that they were appropriate and just—after having first counseled you [pl] with respect to what [you] ought to do on the basis of the things that have now happened, I will later go through thoroughly what concerns those things, for the sake of those repeatedly asking what indeed I was wishing when I went the second time, so that peripheral issues do not turn out to be spoken of by me as the main issues.

Here is what I mean. One who is counseling a sick man adhering to
330d a regimen that is depraved with respect to health ought first to change his life into something else, and if he is willing to obey, at that point to suggest other things too; but if he is not willing, I would hold one who flees from counseling such a one to be both a man and a doctor, and one who remains to be the opposite: unmanly and artless. It is indeed the same with respect to a city as well, whether it has one sovereign authority or more.[40] If, while duly proceeding on the correct path, he should
330e seek counsel regarding something advantageous for the regime,[41] then it belongs to one with intelligence[42] to give counsel to those of this sort. But as for those who are deviating altogether from the correct regime and are in no way willing to go in its tracks, who declare beforehand to
331a the counselor that he is to let the regime be and is not to change it and that he will be put to death if he should change it, and who direct their servants to give counsel as to how their wishes and desires would most easily and most quickly come to be [satisfied] for all time—I would hold the one who remains to give such counsels to be unmanly, and the one who does not remain to be a man.

This is the intention I hold whenever someone should seek counsel from me concerning any of the greatest things in his life, such as the
331b acquisition of money or the care of body or soul; if he should seem to

40. Throughout the following passage, Plato seems to shift between the singular and the plural in referring to the one needing counsel.

41. A variant reading in the manuscripts, differing by only one letter and accepted by several editors and translators, has the word "proceeding" in the feminine so as to accord with "regime" rather than "sovereign." The clause then would read "if, the regime proceeding duly on the right path, he should seek counsel regarding something advantageous."

42. Lit. "one having a mind."

me to be living daily in a certain way[43] or to be willing to obey once I have counseled him concerning those things about which he is consulting in common, I eagerly give counsel and do not stop at the perfunctory discharge of duty.[44] But if he does not seek counsel from me at all, or if it is clear that he will in no way obey me when I do counsel him, I will not go to counsel such a one on my own initiative, nor will I use force, even if he should be my own son. Now, to a slave I would give counsel and, if
331c he were unwilling at least, I would use force; but I hold it not to be pious to use force upon a father or a mother unless they are out of their senses due to illness; but if they are living a certain life, which has been set up to be agreeable to them but not to me, I do not make myself hateful by admonishing in vain, nor do I serve them by flattering, furnishing fulfillments of desires which, if I myself were fond of them, I would not be willing to live.

Indeed, one who is sensible ought to live intending this same thing
331d concerning his city as well: he should speak, if it does not appear to him to be nobly governed, if he is neither going to be talking in vain nor to be put to death for speaking; but he should not bring force against a fatherland to produce a change of regime when it is not possible for it to come to be the best without exile and slaughter of men; rather, he should keep quiet and pray for the good things for both himself and the city.

In this same way, indeed, I would counsel you [pl], and as I, with Dion, was counseling Dionysius too: first, to live each day in such a way that he
331e was going to be as much in control of himself as possible, and to acquire faithful friends and comrades so as not to suffer the very things his father suffered, who took many and great Sicilian cities that had been pillaged by barbarians but, having recolonized them, was not able to set up in each of them regimes of men who were his comrades,[45] neither
332a foreigners from anywhere else, nor his brothers, whom he himself had raised when they were younger, and whom he had made from private persons into rulers and from poor into surpassingly rich. None of these was he able successfully to make into a partner in his rule, whether by

43. I.e., in the way of which Plato approves.

44. "Perfunctory discharge of duty" translates the participle *aphosiōsamenos*, the literal meaning of which refers to religious purification from pollution. The metaphorical meaning, "to do something in a perfunctory way" may have evolved from use of the word in reference to the routine performance of rituals.

45. Marginal emendations in the two oldest and best manuscripts add the adjective "faithful" (*pistas*) to this line, so that it would read "was not able to set up in each of them faithful regimes of men who were his comrades." This emendation also appears in the main text of later manuscripts.

persuasion, teaching, benefactions, or ties of kinship. Rather, he came to be seven times paltrier than Darius, who, trusting neither in brothers nor in anyone raised by him but only in his partners in the subdu-
332b ing of the Mede and eunuch, apportioned among them seven regions, each greater than all of Sicily, made use of them as faithful partners who attacked neither him nor each other, and gave demonstration of a model of what sort the good lawgiver and king ought to become; for by establishing laws, he has preserved the Persian empire even up to the present day.[46]

In addition to these things, moreover, the Athenians, having taken over many Greek cities that they had not colonized themselves, which had been invaded by barbarians but were still inhabited, nevertheless
332c kept guard over their empire for seventy years by having acquired men who were friends in each of the cities.[47] But Dionysius, having gathered all of Sicily in a single city, in his wisdom trusting no one, with difficulty saved himself; for he was poor in men who were friends and faithful—and there is no greater sign of virtue and vice than this, whether one is bereft of such men or not.

So Dion and I together counseled these things to Dionysius too, since
332d from his father it had turned out that he had come to be unacquainted with education and unacquainted with the proper associations:[48] [we counseled him] first . . . ,[49] and then, once he had set out in this way, to acquire other friends for himself from among his intimates[50] and his agemates and those who were in accord with respect to virtue, but most

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46. Darius the Great ruled the Persian Empire from 522 BCE until his death in 486 BCE. The "Mede and eunuch" to whom Plato refers would be the ruler of the Persian Empire preceding Darius, whose identity is a matter of long-standing debate. Plato seems to be the only one to suggest he was a eunuch (a detail not compatible with Herodotus's account). Yet Plato makes the same claim even more clearly at *Laws* 695b2–c4; cf. that passage (in the context of the Athenian Stranger's condensed history of the Persian empire; 693d–696a, 697c–698a, 698c–699d) with Herodotus 3.28–30 and 61ff.

47. According to Harward (1932, 203n 43), "The 'seventy years' describes roughly the period 478–404 B.C.," i.e., from the formation of the Delian League to the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War.

48. The word translated "associations" here and "intercourse" elsewhere (*sunousia*) is most literally a "being together"; in this instance, it should be noted that the word can have the specific meaning of "intercourse *with a teacher*" and thus "attendance at his teaching" (LSJ, s.v.).

49. The word "first" (*prōton*) being followed immediately by the word "next" (*epeita*) in the best manuscript, as well as disagreements between other manuscripts, indicates some corruption of the text here. The reading I have favored suggests some kind of lacuna in the text. Souilhé and Novotný have proposed emending *epeita tautēi* to *epi tauta*, denying any further missing text; the sense would then be "first, in service of these [goals]."

50. Or "relatives" (*oikeiōn*); see n. 1 above.

of all himself with himself, for he had come to be amazingly in need of this. We were not saying it as clearly as this, for it was not safe, but we were speaking in riddles and contending by way of speeches that every man would thus save both himself and those of whom he would come
332e to be a leader, but that by not turning himself in this direction, he would bring everything to the opposite completion; and that by proceeding in the way we were saying and successfully making himself sensible and moderate,[51] if he should then resettle the desolated Sicilian cities and bind them together by laws and regimes so as to be intimates to him and to each other with a view to aiding each other against the barbar-
333a ians, he would then make his father's empire not only twice as great, but in fact many times greater. For if these things should come to pass, he would then be ready to enslave the Carthaginians to a much greater extent than the slavery that had come to be for them in Gelon's time—as opposed to how it is now: his father ordered that a tribute be paid to the barbarians.[52]

These were the things said and encouraged by us, the plotters against Dionysius, according to such speeches as were spreading from many places and indeed which, by prevailing over Dionysius, cast Dion out
333b and cast us down into fear. But—that we may wrap up in a short time no few affairs—Dion, coming from the Peloponnese and Athens, admonished Dionysius by deed.[53] But when he twice set the city free and gave it back to them, the Syracusans then suffered the very same thing with

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51. "Sensible and moderate" translates the phrase *emphrona te kai sōphrona*; the two adjectives are closely related. The latter word refers to one of the four Platonic cardinal virtues; both share their root with *phronesis*, "practical wisdom" or "prudence." See n. 7 to Letter Two and n. 15 to Letter Three. For the importance of this phrase to the sense of the whole letter, see Harward 1932, 204n45.

52. Gelon, who ruled the city from 485 BCE until his death in 478 BCE, was the first of an earlier series of Syracusan tyrants. In 480 BCE, he scored a decisive victory over Hamlicar I's Carthaginian army in the Battle of Himera, and granted peace on terms that included the payment of 2,000 talents of silver in reparations (Diodorus Siculus 11.26.2). But this proved to be only the beginning of centuries of wars over Sicily between Carthage and Syracuse. In 376 BCE, Dionysius the Elder was defeated by Himilco Mago's forces at the Battle of Cronium, agreeing thereafter to pay 1,000 talents of silver as reparations (15.17.5). These reparations are apparently what Plato here refers to as the payment of "tribute" to the barbarians established by Dionysius (see Harward 1932, 204n46).

53. In 357 BCE, the exiled Dion sailed to Sicily with a small mercenary force to depose Dionysius the Younger. His campaign was successful, but, as is implied by the next sentence, the exercise soon needed to be repeated. In the aftermath of his victory, Dion lost his power over the Syracusans to his military ally turned political rival Heraclides, who was advancing more popular political proposals (see n. 28 to Letter Three). Not long after leaving, however, the Syracusans found themselves once more in mortal peril and called for Dion to return and save them, which he did. See Plutarch, *Dion* 22ff.

respect to Dion as Dionysius had when [Dion] undertook to educate him and to raise him to be a king worthy of rule so as to partner with
333c him in all of life. Dionysius [listened][54] to the slanderers and to those who were saying that Dion, plotting at the tyranny, was doing everything he did at that time in order that Dionysius, having had his mind beguiled by education, would not care about his rule and turn it over to him, while Dion usurped it and cast Dionysius out from the rule by trickery. These things were victorious at that time; and also the second time, when they were being said among the Syracusans, by means of a victory that was very strange and shameful for those responsible for
333d the victory. And those who are calling upon me in regard to the current affairs ought to hear what sort of thing has happened.

I, an Athenian man, Dion's comrade and his ally, came to the tyrant so that I could make friendship take the place of war between them; but I was defeated in contending against the slanderers. Dionysius was trying to persuade me by means of honors and money to join with him as a witness and friend, with a view to lending seemliness to his casting out of Dion. Of course, he altogether missed the mark in these things. But
333e later, when Dion was coming back home, he brought with him a pair of brothers from Athens who had come to be [his friends][55] not from philosophy but from the promiscuous comradeship belonging to most friends, which they work out through hosting someone as a guest-friend or through initiation into the lesser and greater mysteries.[56] In this case, the pair of friends who together brought him back had come to be his comrades both from these things and from providing the service of his
334a return; but when they came to Sicily, since they perceived that Dion had been slandered among the Siceliotes who had been freed by him to the effect that he was plotting to become tyrant, they not only betrayed their comrade and guest-friend but came to be, as it were, perpetrators of his murder, themselves holding weapons in their hands as they stood by

54. The main verb in this sentence appears to be missing; Harward, whom I follow in supplying the word "listened," calls it a "violent anacolouthon of the nominativus pendens type" (1932, 205n49).

55. The word for "friends" (*philō*) appears in the margins of the best manuscripts and in the main text of some others.

56. "Initiation into the lesser and greater mysteries" translates the phrase *muein kai epopteuein*. These two verbs refer to different stages of initiation into the Greek mystery cults and particularly into the Eleusinian Mysteries. Initiation into the "lesser mysteries" (*muein*) granted one the status of *mustēs*; by initiation into the "greater mysteries" (*epopteuein*), one graduated to the status of *epoptēs*.

as auxiliaries for the murderers.[57] And I, for my part, neither pass over the shameful and impious thing, nor do I say anything—for to harp on[58] these things is an object of care for many others and it will be the
334b object of their care in the time to come as well—but as for what is being said about them as Athenians, that they brought shame upon their city, I reject it. For I claim that he too is an Athenian who did not betray this very Dion, though he stood to obtain money and many other honors. For he had become a friend to Dion not through vulgar friendship, but through partnership in liberal education. In this alone ought one who possesses mind to trust, more than in kinship of souls and of bod-
334c ies; thus, I do not deem the pair who killed Dion worthy of bringing reproach upon their city, as though they had ever come to be men of any account.

All these things have been said for the sake of counsel to the Dionean friends and kin. Indeed, the counsel I give with respect to these things is the same counsel and the same speech that I am now saying for the third time, you [pl] being the third ones to whom I am saying it. Let not Sicily, nor any other city, be enslaved to human masters, but, as my speech has it at least, to laws; for otherwise it is better neither for the enslavers
334d nor the enslaved, not for them, nor for their children's children, nor for their descendants, but the attempt is altogether ruinous. It is the small and illiberal characters among souls who like to snatch up such gains, knowing nothing of the good and just[59] things, both divine and human, in the future and the present propitious moment.

Of these things I undertook first to persuade Dion, second Dionysius, and third now you [pl]. Now, then, be persuaded [pl] by me, for

57. It is well attested that Dion's murderer was Callippus, the Athenian who succeeded Dion as ruler of Syracuse and reigned there for just over a year (Diodorus Siculus 16.31.7; see also Plutarch, *Dion* 54ff., Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 11.119, and Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1373a18–20). Nepos's biography of Dion appears to be the only source to identify a brother of Callipus, a man named Philostratus who played a peripheral role in the assassination plot.

58. "To harp on" translates *humnein*, which was translated "to sing the praises of" at 311a; see n. 9 to Letter Two.

59. The word "just" (*dikaiōn*) is proposed in a sublinear emendation in one of the best manuscripts as well as in the main text of later manuscripts, and appears to be a necessary correction to *diōn* (as in the main text of the best manuscripts). Probably, the name "Dion" was miscopied from the next line. However, it could be that Plato actually wrote *diōn*, a rather poetic word for "divine" or "heavenly," which would also be a play on the name "Dion" (*Diōn*). Harward has noted that "the language" in this section, beginning at 334c8, "becomes impressive, and poetical words and phrases appear" (1932, 206n57).

the sake of[60] Zeus Third Savior,[61] and then looking to Dionysius and
334e Dion, of whom the one who was not persuaded now lives but not nobly, while the one who was persuaded has been nobly put to death; for to suffer whatever one may suffer while aiming at the noblest things, for both oneself and one's city, is altogether correct and noble. For neither is anyone of us naturally deathless, nor would one become happy if one should somehow turn out to be, as it seems to the many. For no bad or
335a good worthy of account belongs to the soulless, but this[62] will turn out to belong to each soul, either while it is with a body or after it has been separated. One really always ought to be persuaded by the ancient and sacred speeches, which indeed reveal to us that the soul is deathless, that it has judges, and that it suffers the greatest penalties whenever it is rid of its body; wherefore ought one to believe that it is a smaller evil to suffer even the great sins and injustices than to do them; which the lover of
335b money (who is a poor man with respect to his soul) either doesn't hear, or, if he does hear them, he ridicules, as he supposes is apt, and shamelessly[63] snatches from everywhere, like a wild beast, everything that he supposes will stuff him with eating, or drinking, or the furnishing of what concerns the servile and graceless pleasure said, incorrectly, to be "Aphroditean,"[64] since he is blind and does not see what accompanies the impious activity in his acts of plunder[65]—such a great evil always

60. Usually, I have reserved the phrase "for the sake of" to translate the preposition *heneka*, but here and in a few other places in Letters Seven and Eight, it translates instead the word *charin*. *Charis* means "grace," both as a human characteristic and in reference to the triad of goddesses known collectively as the Graces or Charites. In the accusative (*charin*), it was commonly used as a one-word formula meaning "in gratitude to" or "thanks to" and hence generally "for the sake of."

61. The third in a series—for example, the third cup of wine—was often dedicated to Zeus Sōtēr "Zeus Savior," which made for a superstitious belief in the propitious character of thirds (cf. "third time's the charm"). Plato makes this same reference again below (340a3–4) as well as elsewhere in his dialogues: *Charmides* 167a9, *Philebus* 66d4–5, *Republic* 583b2–3, and *Laws* 692a3; cf. *Laws* 960c8.

62. It is unclear whether "this" refers to "bad and good" or to death. Two interpretations illustrate some possible meanings. "Good and bad, which are defined in the end by knowledge, can come about only in the soul, the seat of knowledge" (Brisson 1993, 221n81). "The thought seems to be as follows: Nothing that possesses a soul can avoid death; people are wrong therefore in thinking that we should be happy if we did not have to die, for that would mean that we were creatures without souls and hence incapable of experiencing either good or evil" (Morrow 1962, 229n34).

63. The word for "shamelessly" is related not to *aischron* but to *aidōs*, "awe" or "reverence"; see n. 9 to Letter Six.

64. I.e., sexual pleasure. Cf. 328b–d above.

65. "Acts of plunder" translates the unusual word *harpagmatōn*, which appears here in the best manuscript. All the next best manuscripts have instead the more common word *pragmatōn*, "affairs."

together with each act of injustice—which necessarily drags along with the doer of injustice as he goes about upon the earth and once he has
335c returned below the earth on a journey that is altogether and in every way dishonored and wretched.

I, in saying these and other such things, was persuading Dion, and I would most justly be incensed at those who killed him—and at Dionysius, in a very similar way. For both inflicted the greatest harms on me and, so to speak, on all other human beings, the former having ruined the one wishing to make use of justice, the latter, though he held the greatest power, having been in no way willing to make use of justice
335d throughout his whole rule, in which, had philosophy and power really come to be in the same person, shining out among all human beings, both Greek and barbarian, he would have sufficiently set down in everyone the true opinion that neither a city nor any man would ever become happy who did not lead his life with practical wisdom under justice, either possessing [this][66] in himself or having been justly reared and educated in the ways of pious ruling men.

335e These are the things that Dionysius harmed; the others would be a small harm to me compared to these. But he who killed Dion does not know that he achieved the same thing by doing this. For of Dion I know clearly, as much as a human being is able to affirm confidently about human beings, that if he had taken hold of the rule, he never would
336a have turned toward another form[67] of rule than this: first, with regard to Syracuse, his fatherland, once he had delivered her from slavery and set her up free in form, then he would by every contrivance have adorned the citizens with the proper and best laws; following on these things, what he would have striven eagerly to do would have been to recolonize all Sicily and make it free from the barbarians, casting some out and subduing others more easily than Hiero;[68] and had these things in turn
336b come to pass through a man who was just and courageous, moderate, and philosophic, then the very same opinion concerning virtue would have come to be among the many that, if Dionysius had been persuaded, would have come to be among, so to speak, all human beings, and saved

66. No object whatsoever is given for the participle "possessing" (*kektēmenos*). The "true opinion" Plato has mentioned is one possibility; others are prudence, justice, or both.

67. Here and later in the sentence, "form" translates *schema*, literally "shape."

68. See n. 8 to Letter Two. Hiero repopulated the Sicilian cities of Naxos and Catana with Dorian Greeks, sending the previous inhabitants to settle in Leontini (Diodorus Siculus 11.49).

them. But as it is, either, presumably, some daemon,[69] or some avenging spirit,[70] falling upon them by means of lawlessness, godlessness, and most of all brazen[71] acts born of unlearnedness[72]—from which all evils to everyone take root, sprout up, and later culminate[73] in the bitterest fruit for those who bear it—this unlearnedness overturned and destroyed everything on the second occasion.

336c Well then, let us now speak reverently[74] for the sake of good omens for the third occasion. Nevertheless, I counsel you [pl], his friends, to imitate Dion, both in his goodwill for his fatherland and in his moderate regimen in regard to nourishment, and to attempt, upon more favorable auguries, to bring his wishes to their completion—what they were, you [pl] have heard clearly from me—but as for him among you who is
336d not capable of living in the Dorian[75] way according to your forefathers, who pursues the life both of Dion's slaughterers and of Sicily: neither call upon such a one nor suppose that he would ever do anything faithful and sound; but call upon the others with a view to a recolonization of all of Sicily and to equality under the law, produced from Sicily itself and from the whole Peloponnese—and do not fear Athens, for there are

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69. Daemons occupied a somewhat ill-defined place among the spiritual or supernatural beings of Greek religion: beneath the gods themselves, it would seem, but above the heroes (see, e.g., Plato, *Laws* 717b2–4). The word *daimōn* occurs nowhere else in the *Letters*; but note the etymological link to *eudaimonia*, "happiness," literally a human state governed or overseen by a "good daemon."

70. "Avenging spirit" translates *alitērios*, which can simply mean "one who sins" or "one who is guilty," but in this context appears to carry the secondary meaning of a spirit who avenges injustice, especially murder (cf. Antiphon, *Third Tetralogy* 4.2.8). This reading is strengthened by the mention of the *xenikai erinues* ("guest-friend Furies") at 357a4 below (see note ad loc.); see Harward 1932, 208n65 and Burnyeat and Frede 2015, 155. There is only one other instance of a related word in the *Letters*: at 351c3, *alitēriōdē* is translated "accursed," indicating a pollution that attaches to the committer of sin worthy of vengeance.

71. The word for "brazen acts," here and at 336d, is *tolma*; all related words elsewhere in the text are rendered with some form of the word "daring."

72. "Unlearnedness" is a literal rendering of *amathia*. It could also be translated "stupidity," which conveys the word's sharply pejorative connotation, but the literal meaning is important to understand Plato's attribution to *amathia* of "all evils." Cf. *Alcibiades* 118b4ff. The same word occurs at 351d9 below.

73. Lit. "come to completion" (*apotelei*).

74. "Let us speak reverently" translates *euphēmōmen*, literally "let us speak well," a word whose meaning is well illustrated by taking note of its antonym, *blasphēmein*, "to speak profanely of sacred things," the root of the English "blasphemy." To "speak well," then, is not merely to "be positive" or "keep it light," but specifically to avoid blaspheming.

75. Syracuse was one of several major Sicilian cities said to have been founded by Dorian Greeks (see Thudycides 6.3.2, 7.57). The Dorian tradition to which Plato appeals here is best understood by reference to the famously abstemious way of life of the Spartans, leaders of the Dorian Greeks throughout the classical period.

some even there who are distinguished among all human beings with respect to virtue, and who hate the brazen acts of men who murder guest-friends. But if it should be that these [counsels] have come too
336e late, since the many and varied conflicts naturally growing each day among the factions are pressing upon you [pl], any man to whom some divine fortune has given even a small share of correct opinion ought presumably to know that there is no cessation of evils for the faction-riven until those who have prevailed by means of battles, casting out of
337a human beings, and slaughters should cease bearing grudges and turning to vengeance against their enemies, and, being self-controlled and giving common laws that are laid down no more properly for themselves than for those who have been defeated,[76] should compel them to be subject to the laws[77] by means of a pair of compulsions, awe and fear:[78] they would compel by means of fear by demonstrating that they are stronger than them with respect to force; and by means of awe, in turn, by being manifestly stronger concerning pleasures and by being more willing and capable of being slaves to the laws. But otherwise, it is not possible that
337b a city riven by faction within itself should put a stop to evils; rather factions, enmities, hatreds, and distrusts always like to arise in cities that are themselves so disposed with respect to themselves.

But those who have prevailed, whenever they should desire salvation, ought always, among themselves, to select from among the Greeks men whom they find through inquiry to be the best: first of all, elders, who possess children and wives at home, and whose own ancestors are as much as possible many and famous,[79] and all of them possessing sufficient
337c possessions—as a number, fifty such are sufficient for a city of ten thousand men. Indeed, they should send for these men from their homes by means of entreaties and the greatest possible honors, and once they have been sent for,[80] they should entreat and direct them to give laws, having sworn oaths to apportion more neither to the victors nor to the vanquished, equally and in common for the whole city. The laws having

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76. The reading of one of the best manuscripts, attested also as a marginal emendation in the other. The alternate reading has *pros hēdonē*, "with a view to pleasure," instead of *prosēkon*, "properly," yielding the reading "giving common laws that are laid down no more with a view to their own pleasure than to that of those who have been overcome."

77. Lit. "to make use of the laws" (*chrēsthai tois nomois*).

78. On "awe" (*aidōs*), see n. 9 to Letter Six; on the combination "awe and fear" as a foundation for willing enslavement to the laws, see *Laws* 698a9–c3.

79. Marginal emendations in the best manuscripts (favored by Burnet and Souilhé) make the phrase "many and famous" read instead "many, good, and famous."

80. I.e., once they have arrived.

been given, everything comes down to this: if those who have won victory should render themselves, more than the vanquished, subservient
337d to the laws, everything will be full of salvation and happiness and there will be refuge from all evils; but if they do not, neither call upon me nor upon another partner for help against whoever is unpersuaded by the letter that has now been sent to you. For these things are siblings of both what Dion and what I undertook to do together, meaning well toward the Syracusans, though in fact they were second. First were the things undertaken to be done first, with Dionysius himself, which were common goods for all; but some fortune stronger than human beings
337e dissipated them. May you [pl] attempt with better fortune to do these things now, with good fate and some divine fortune.

Well then, let my counsel and message[81] have been spoken, as well as the account of my earlier arrival at the court of Dionysius; as for how the later journey and sailing came to pass at once appropriately and harmoniously, he who cares may listen to what is after this. For
338a indeed, my first period of occupation in Sicily has now been thoroughly described in what I said before my counsel to the intimates and comrades close to Dion.

After those things, then, I persuaded Dionysius, in whatever way I was ever capable, to let me go, and we came to an agreement on both sides for when there would come to be peace—for there was war in Sicily at the time.[82] Dionysius said that he would send for Dion and me to come back once he had set what concerned his rule back up in a safer state
338b for himself, but he was requesting that Dion should understand[83] what had then come to pass for him to be not an exile, but a removal;[84] and I agreed to the terms of these speeches.[85]

When there came to be peace, he sent for me; but he begged Dion to hold off for yet another year, though he was requesting that I come by all

81. Lit. "letter" or perhaps "command"; see n. 43 to Letter Two.

82. Reading and punctuating the text at 338a3–b1 according to the assertion of Harward, who claims that this is a hyperbaton characteristic of Plato's later style (1932, 209n74; cf. 89–90).

83. "Understand" translates *dianoeisthai*; see n. 5 to Letter Three.

84. Morrow explains the difference between "removal" (*metastasis*) and "exile" (*phugē*) as distinct legal concepts: "Μετάστασις, as distinct from φυγή, both technical terms in Greek law, did not involve the confiscation of the condemned person's property" (1962, 233n43). See also LSJ, s.v. "metastasis" (def. A.II).

85. Marginal emendations in the best manuscripts suggest the alternative reading "I agreed that I would come [back] according to the terms of these speeches" (*hēxein hōmologēsa* rather than *xunōmologēsa*).

means. Dion, then, directed and begged me to set sail; for indeed, word from Sicily was spreading far that Dionysius had at present returned amazingly to a desire for philosophy; hence Dion vigorously begged us not to disobey the summons. But I, while I had surely known many
338c such things to come to pass for the young with respect to philosophy, nevertheless it seemed to me safer, at that time at least, to bid a great farewell to both Dion and Dionysius, and I became hateful to both of them by answering that I was old and that none of the things that were now being done were coming to pass in accordance with the agreements.

Now it is likely that, after this, both Archytas[86] arrived at the court of Dionysius[87]—before sailing home, I had brought about a guest-relationship and friendship between Archytas (along with those in
338d Tarentum) and Dionysius—and there were some others among the Syracusans who had learned[88] some things from Dion, as well as still others [who had learned] from these ones, filled up with certain misunderstandings in philosophy;[89] they seemed to me to be attempting to converse with Dionysius about what concerned such things as though Dionysius had learned everything I thought.[90] He is not ill-natured

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86. This is the first mention in the *Letters* of Archytas, the addressee of Letters Nine and Twelve. A contemporary of Plato, Archytas was born and lived in the Italian city of Tarentum. He was a man of extraordinary and diverse talents, and it was under his protracted rule that Tarentum reached its apex and dominated southern Italy (see Strabo 6.3.4). A follower of the Pythagorean school, Archytas was among the most brilliant mathematicians and scientists of his day, and Pythagorean philosophy flourished in Tarentum under his influence (Strabo 6.3.4; van der Waerden 1961, 110–12; Heath 1981, 246–49). Yet, although his encounter with Archytas cannot but have been highly significant for Plato, the character of their relationship is not entirely clear; see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.17; *Republic* 1.10; Demosthenes, *Erotic Essay* 61.46; Plutarch, *Marcellus* 14.6; *Quaestiones Convivales* 8.2. Lloyd (1990) argues that Plato's adversarial relationship with Archytas motivated the writing of Letter Seven.

87. Lloyd points out the anacolouthic character of this sentence (1990, 162–63). The "both" (*te*) earlier in the sentence makes us expect a grammatically parallel clause that does not come.

88. With only one exception, the word "learn" throughout this paragraph translates the verb *diakouein*, literally "to hear out" or "to hear through to the end." Likewise, the word "misunderstandings" at 338d3 is *parakousmatōn*, "things misheard" or even "things overheard." Note also that "he had learned nothing" at 338e1, and "he did not learn" at 338e3, translate forms of the root verb *akouein*, "to hear," without the *dia-* prefix—not only had Dionysius not heard anything "through to the end," he had heard nothing *at all*. Only the phrase "the ability to learn" at 338d6–7 includes the verb normally translated "to learn," *manthanein*. The use of words of hearing to refer to intellectual rather than sensory apprehension is prevalent in the following pages.

89. An alternative reading of this part of the sentence would run "and there were some among the Syracusans who had learned some things from Dion, and some, different from these, filled up with certain misunderstandings in philosophy."

90. Or "intended" or "understood" (*dienooumēn*); see n. 5 to Letter Three.

with respect to the ability to learn, having an amazing love of honor. Perhaps, then, the things being said were agreeable to him, and at the
338e same time he was ashamed, as it was becoming manifest that he had learned nothing while I was visiting, and hence he came to a desire to learn more clearly, while at the same time the love of honor was pressing upon him—the reasons why he did not learn during my earlier visit, we went through in the speeches given above, just now. So when I returned home safely and denied him when he called the second time, as I said just now, Dionysius seems to me to have been altogether pursuing his
339a love of honor, lest I should ever seem to anyone to be disdaining his nature and disposition while also having had experience of his way of living, and to be, out of disgust, no longer willing to visit him.

It is just of me to speak the truth and to endure it if someone, having heard the things that happened, should disdain my philosophy and hold that the tyrant is intelligent. For Dionysius, the third time, sent me a trireme for the sake of an easy journey, and he sent Archedemus[91]
339b (the one of whom, Dionysius held, I thought most highly of those in Sicily, one of those who had spent time with Archytas) and other notables from among those in Sicily. And these were all reporting to us the same account, that it was amazing how far Dionysius had advanced in philosophy. And he sent me a very long letter, knowing how I was disposed toward Dion as well as of Dion's eagerness for me to set sail and go to Syracuse; for the letter was prepared with a view to all these things, and had a beginning that explained things in the following way: "Dionysius
339c to Plato"—and, having said the customary[92] things in addition to this, he immediately said, "If, obeying us, you should come now to Sicily, first of all, what is happening concerning Dion will start to be just the way you yourself would want it—and I know that you will want the measured things, and I will concede them; but should you refuse, none of the affairs concerning Dion, neither the other things nor the ones concerning [Dion] himself, will come out to your liking." Thus did he say
339d these things; to say the others would take long, and this is not a propitious moment. But other letters kept coming in from Archytas and those in Tarentum, extolling the philosophy of Dionysius, and saying that, if I did not go now, I would be altogether rending apart[93] their friendship

91. See n. 1 to Letter Two.

92. Lit. "lawful" (*nomima*).

93. The word for "I would be rending apart" here is *diabaloiēn*, which is the same word that I have translated "slander" elsewhere in the *Letters*.

with Dionysius, which had come to be through me, and was no small matter with respect to the political things.

At that time, with this summons having come to be such, and with some pulling me from Sicily and Italy, and others artlessly thrusting
339e me, as it were, out of Athens with an entreaty, yet again the same speech was coming, that there was a need not to betray Dion, nor my guest-friends and comrades in Tarentum; and lurking beneath this for me was that it is nothing amazing for a young human being, hearing about[94] affairs worthy of account, if he is a good learner, to come to a passionate desire[95] for the best life. There was a need, therefore, to put the matter clearly to the test[96] as to which way things stood after all, and, if indeed things should really be as had been said, in no way to betray this very thing, nor for me truly to become the cause of so great a reproach.
340a So I am carried off, veiled by this calculation, dreading many things and divining not very nobly, as is likely. At any rate, by going I really made this one, at least, "the third for the savior,"[97] for, fortunately, I was saved again, and for these things, at least, I ought to acknowledge gratitude to Dionysius next after a god, because he prevented many who wished to destroy me and gave some part of the affairs concerning me to awe.[98]
340b But when I arrived, I supposed I must first put the following to the test:[99] had Dionysius really been kindled by philosophy as by a fire, or had this great speech come to Athens in vain? Now, there is a certain way of attempting to grasp such things that is not lowborn but is really

94. *Parakouonta* here might also be translated "overhearing," "mishearing," or "misunderstanding"; see n. 88 above.

95. "Passionate desire" translates a form of *erōs*, whence the English "erotic." Though *erōs* can refer to what we would call "erotic" or "romantic" love, its scope of meaning is much broader. It refers in general to the human attraction to and desire for the beautiful or noble (*to kalon*; see n. 21 to Letter Two), in all its psychological complexity. Socrates's speech in Plato's *Symposium* brings out the connection of this passionate desire for *to kalon* with the human longing for immortality, and thus extends *erōs* beyond physical or romantic love by connecting it to the loftiest political, literary, and philosophic ambitions. It is indeed a quintessential feature of Platonic philosophy that the philosophic activity itself is characterized as "erotic"; see *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, and cf. *Republic*, books 5, 6, and 9. The only other occurrences of any such words in the *Letters* are in Letter Eight, at 354d5 and 355d5.

96. The word for "put to the test" here is *exelegxai*, related to "elenchtic," the word that describes Socratic refutation. Indeed, *exelegxai* could also mean "to refute" even here, though the context seems to call for the translation I have chosen.

97. See n. 61 above.

98. That is, Dionysius allowed himself to be guided by *aidōs* ("reverence," "awe," "shame"; see n. 9 in Letter Six) in some part of his dealings with Plato.

99. *Elegchon*; see n. 96 above.

fitting for tyrants, especially those filled with misunderstandings,[100] which, as I indeed perceived right away when I got there, was very much what had happened to Dionysius. One needs to show such people both
340c what sort of thing the whole problem[101] is and through how many problems and how much toil it lies. For the one who has listened, if he should really be a philosopher, being both intimate with and worthy of the divine problem, will hold that he has heard of an amazing path, which one must immediately strain to follow, and that life would not be worth living for one who would do otherwise. After this, then, having strained both himself and his leader in following the path, he will not let up until he should either bring everything to completion or obtain such a power that, separately from the one who has shown him, he is incapable[102] of being a guide himself.

340d In this way and according to these intentions will such a person live, managing whatever will be his business, but, beyond everything, always holding on to philosophy and to the daily nourishment that would most of all succeed in making him a good learner, with a good memory, and capable of calculating, as one who is sober in himself; and the opposite of this, he continues hating to the end. But those who are not really philosophers, but have been tinctured by opinions just as those whose bodies have been burnt by the sun, once they have seen how many are
340e the subjects of learning, and the extent of the toil, and the ordered daily regimen that befits the problem, hold it to be hard and impossible for
341a themselves; they do not, indeed, come to be capable of engaging in the practice, but some of them persuade themselves that they have heard

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100. Lit. "things misheard" or "overheard" (*parakousmatōn*); see n. 88 above.

101. The word *pragma*, here translated "problem," appears eight times in these three paragraphs (between 340b8 and 341c7), in addition to several instances of related words (*prattō*, *praxis*). A word I most commonly translate "affair," *pragma* can range in meaning from the extremely broad "thing" or "matter" to a variety of more specific connotations. In the present passage, Plato seems to use *pragma* to refer to the "problems" encountered in philosophic investigations, i.e., to the "matters of concern" for philosophers. Although the translation "problem" may sometimes mislead the reader where "affair" or "matter" might be more appropriate, I have consistently rendered *pragma* by "problem" from here through 341c in order to allow the reader to follow more easily Plato's use of this word in this context. See also *pragmatos* at 344a3 with my note there, and consider also 312a5–6 and 313b4 above, along with my notes there on *pragma* and *pragmateia*.

102. The best manuscripts here read "incapable," which seems to be contradictory to the sense of the passage. In one manuscript, a scholiast has suggested the emendation "capable" (removing the alpha privative), and Stephanus adopted the emendation "not incapable," both of which are plausible suggestions. But the reader should have the opportunity to consider whether the more challenging reading, which the manuscripts all contain, might be the correct one.

the whole sufficiently and have no further need of any problems. Now indeed this attempt comes to be the clear and safest one with respect to those who luxuriate and are incapable of enduring toil, since one of these can never cast the blame upon the one who is showing him the way, but rather upon himself, for his not being capable of engaging in all the practices advantageous for the problem. This is the way the things then spoken were spoken also to Dionysius. Neither, therefore, was
341b I going through everything, nor was Dionysius begging me to; for he pretended both to know and sufficiently to have a hold on many, even the greatest, things because of hearsay from others.[103]

I even hear that he has subsequently written about the things he then heard, composing as though it were his own treatise[104] and not at all made up of the things he heard; but I know nothing of these writings. I know some others have written about these same things, but as to who they are, they do not even know themselves. This much, at any rate, have
341c I to explain about all who have written or will write, and who claim to know about the things I take seriously, whether claiming to have heard them from me, or from others, or that they discovered them themselves: it is not possible, according to my opinion at least, that they understand[105] anything of the problem. Therefore there is no writing of mine, at least, concerning them,[106] nor will there ever come to be; for it is in no way speakable as are the other subjects of learning, but rather, from the coming to be of much intercourse concerning the problem itself, and
341d living together, suddenly, as from a jumping fire, a light is kindled, and, having come to be in the soul, it straightaway nourishes itself. And yet I know this much, at least: that in being written or said by me, these things would be said best; and that, if they were written badly, it would pain me not least. But had they appeared to me to be sufficiently writable and speakable to the many, what nobler thing could have been done in life by us than this, both to write what is a great benefit for human beings
341e and to lead nature forth into the light for all? But the undertaking[107]

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103. The word for "hearsay" is *parakoas*, related to but distinct from *parakousma*, as at 338d3 and 340b6. This word could also mean "misunderstandings" or "things misheard." See n. 88 above.

104. "Treatise" here seems to be the correct translation of *technēn*, which more usually means "art." The translation "as though it were his own art" is also possible and should be considered.

105. Lit. "hear" (*epaïō*; see n. 88 above).

106. I.e., concerning the things Plato takes seriously.

107. "Undertaking" or "attempt" is the primary meaning of *epicheirēsis*, though in Aristotle the word can also mean a line of dialectical reasoning. Thus, "undertaking concerning them"

spoken of concerning them I do not hold to be good for human beings unless for some few—however many are themselves capable of finding them out through a small indication; of the others, it would fill some, in no way harmoniously, with incorrect disdain, and others with a lofty
342a and empty hope as though they had learned some august things.

It has come about that I have in mind to speak at still greater length about these things; for perhaps the things about which I'm speaking will be clearer once they have been stated in some way. For there is a certain true speech that opposes him who has dared to write of such things at all. And though it has often been said by me before, it is likely that it must be spoken now too.

There are, of each of the beings, three things through which it is necessary that scientific knowledge[108] comes to be, [the scientific knowl-
342b edge] itself [being] a fourth—and there is need to set down as fifth the very thing that is knowable[109] and is truly a being.[110] One is a name, second is a definition,[111] the third is an image, fourth is scientific knowledge. Take, then, what concerns one thing, if you wish to learn what is now being spoken of, and think in this way about all things. A circle is something spoken of, of which this very thing we just now uttered is a name. A definition of it is the second thing, being composed of names and phrases;[112] for "that which is everywhere equally distant from the

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could mean something like a "disquisition on them," as Harward has it. See also Morrow's note, as well as Souilhé's, each ad loc.

108. "Scientific knowledge" translates the noun *epistēmē*, which appears five times in this section (between 342a7 and 343e2) and nowhere else in the *Letters*. *Epistēmē* refers to the kind of knowledge one obtains, not by mere familiarity with something, but on the basis of a rigorous understanding of its structure, causes, etc. See n. 5 to Letter Five.

109. "Knowable" is related neither to *oida* nor to *epistamai* (see n. 5 to Letter Five); rather, it translates *gnōston*, which gives the root, for example, of the English "cognition." Thus one might attempt to get hold of the sense of the Greek word by means of some such phrase as "available as an object of cognition."

110. Accepting the marginal emendations in the manuscripts favored by Burnet, Souilhé, and most translators (see Harward 1932, 214n96), which indicate that there were a pair of plausibly minor corruptions in transmission. Though one must strain the grammar a bit, one could render the unemended version "set down as fifth that thing on account of which it is knowable and truly exists."

111. The word "definition," occurring three times here in 342b, twice at 343b, and once at 344b4, appears from the context to be the correct translation for these instances of the word *logos*, a common and important Greek word with a wide range of possible meanings. See n. 3 to Letter Two.

112. "Names and phrases" is the commonsense reading of *onomatōn kai rhēmatōn* (here and at 343b4–5 below) and is supported by the discussion at *Cratylus* 399a6–c6, where Socrates clearly indicates that a *rhēma* is a multiword phrase that may be contracted to form a single *onoma*. However, the explicit definition of these same terms by the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist*

extremes to the middle" would be a definition for that very thing of
342c which "round" and "ring"[113] are names, as well as "circle." Third is what is drawn and erased, and what is turned on a lathe and destroyed—of these things the circle itself, which all these are about,[114] suffers nothing, as it is different from these. Fourth is scientific knowledge and mind and true opinion about these;[115] and all this must be set down in turn as one, being not in sounds, nor in shapes of bodies, but within souls, by which it is clear that it is different both from the nature of the circle[116]
342d and from the three spoken of earlier. Of these, mind has approached most nearly in kinship and similarity to the fifth, while the others are more distant. And it is the same way concerning both straight and at the same time round shape, and color, and concerning good and noble and just, and concerning every body, both artificial and having come to be according to nature (fire, water, and all such things), and concerning every animal, and character in souls, and about all things done and
342e suffered. For of these things, someone who did not somehow or other get hold of the four will never completely be a participant in scientific knowledge of the fifth. In addition, these things undertake to make
343a clear the "of what sort" about each thing no less than the being of each, because of the weakness of the speeches;[117] for the sake of these things,

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(262a1–8) would suggest the translations "noun" and "verb" for *onoma* and *rhēma* respectively. Perhaps most ambiguous but most directly relevant is *Cratylus* 424e4–425a7, where Socrates speculates that, just as letters are combined to make syllables, so from syllables are composed "both *onomatōn* and *rhēmatōn*; and again, from the *onomatōn* and *rhēmatōn* we will compose something great and beautiful and whole, and just as earlier the animal [was made] by [the art of] painting, now *ton logon* [will be made] by *onomastikē*, or *rhētorikē*, or whatever the art may be." See also Burnyeat and Frede, who argue that *rhēmata* here means "descriptions" (2015, 123n7).

113. Two words that can each mean "circular" (*stroggulon* and *perpheres*), with subtle variations in connotation. See Harward 1932, ad loc.

114. The relationship between the circle itself and the "images" of it is stated in extremely vague terms (*hon peri estin*). Burnyeat and Frede (2015, 124) propose "which all these are to do with," noting the alternatives preferred by Morrow ("to which they all refer"), Post, Bury, and Brisson ("are related"), and Souilhé ("auquel on rapporte"). One might compare Letter Two, "All things are around the king of all things, . . . the second things are around a second, and the third things around a third" (312e1–4), where "around" translates the same construction (*peri* + accusative).

115. It is sensible to suppose that the adjective "true" (*alēthēs*) in this sentence would belong with "opinion" (*doxa*), as I have suggested. But if, as the text of the manuscripts seems to indicate, that part of the sentence runs *nous alēthēs te kai doxa*, and not simply *nous alēthēs te doxa*, it is harder to insist against the unexpected reading "true mind and opinion."

116. Or "from the circle of nature itself," where "itself" still refers to the circle (*autou tou kuklou tēs phuseōs*).

117. It is not clear whether "the weakness of the speeches" refers to a deficiency of language as such or should be read rather as "the weakness of the definitions (*logōn*)," i.e., of the second of "the five" identified at 342b2 (see n. 111 above).

no one with intelligence[118] will ever dare to put the things thought about by him into it,[119] and these into something unchangeable[120] at that, which indeed happens with what has been put in engraved writing.

One needs to learn again this thing that has just now been said. Each circle, of those drawn in actions or even turned on a lathe, is full of the opposite of the fifth—for it everywhere touches the straight—but the circle itself, we claim, does not hold in itself something either smaller or larger of the opposite nature. We claim that no name of any of these
343b things is stable at all,[121] that there is nothing to prevent the things now called round from being called straight and the straight round, and that it will be no less stable for those who make changes and call things oppositely. And moreover concerning definition, since the definition itself is indeed composed of names and phrases, it is in no way stable in a sufficiently stable way. And there is in turn a ten-thousandfold argument[122] for each of the four to the effect that it is unclear, but the greatest is the very one we said a short time ago: that, of the two beings—the
343c being, and the "of what sort"—when the soul seeks to know not the "of what sort" but the "what," each of the four, by holding out to the soul, both in speech and in relation to deeds, the thing that is not sought—each thing, both what is said and what is demonstrated, always being rendered easily refutable by the senses—fills every man, so to speak, with every perplexity and unclarity.

And so, in those cases wherein, by bad rearing, we have not been habituated to seek the truth, but rather whichever of the images is held out suffices, we do not become ridiculous to each other, the questioned
343d to the questioners, who are capable of tossing around and refuting the four. But in those cases wherein we compel someone to answer and clarify the fifth, he who wishes to confute[123] (of those who are capable) prevails, and makes the one expounding in speeches or writings or answers

118. Lit. "having a mind."

119. This "it" (*auto*) must refer to "the weakness of the speeches." "[T]he things understood" translates *ta nenoēmena*, a participle related to the word *nous* ("intelligence," "mind") occurring earlier in the sentence. Note also that the words "by him" (*hup' autou*) are reported only in the margins of the manuscripts.

120. Lit. "immovable."

121. "Stable" is *bebaios*, a word that appears four times here at 343b. The same word is translated "steadfast" throughout the rest of the *Letters* (with the exception of "firmly" at 313b6 and "assurance" at 346b8).

122. Note that, while *logos* seems to refer to "definition" as the second of "the four" in the previous sentence, Plato now employs the same word to mean something like an "argument" *about* "the four," and again to mean something like "in speech" later in the sentence.

123. Lit. "to overturn" (*anatrepein*).

seem to the many among the listeners to know[124] nothing of the things about which he is undertaking to write or speak; sometimes they are ignorant that it is not the soul of him who has written or spoken that is
343e refuted, but the nature of each of the four, being naturally poor.

But the way leading through all of them, shifting up and down to each one, does with difficulty give birth to scientific knowledge of the good-natured in the good-natured; but if it[125] grows by nature badly—either naturally, as with the disposition of soul among the many both
344a in learning and in the things spoken of as "traits of character,"[126] or if these are corrupted—not even Lynceus[127] could make such as these see. In one word,[128] neither goodness at learning nor memory could make him see who is not akin to the matter[129]—for it does not come to be to begin with in dispositions alien to it—so that neither those who are not naturally attached[130] and akin both to the just things and to the other things insofar as they are noble (though various ones may yet be good learners and rememberers of various things), nor those who *are* akin but are bad learners and forgetful—none of these could ever learn the truth
344b of virtue to the extent possible, nor of vice. For it is necessary to learn them simultaneously, and also the false and true of the whole of being[131] simultaneously, with total occupation[132] and a great deal of time, just as I said in the beginning. But with difficulty, when each of them has been rubbed against one another—names and definitions, sights and

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124. Here, "to know" is *gignōkein*, "recognize" or "understand," and neither *eidenai* (which I most commonly translate "to know") nor *epistasthai* ("to know scientifically"). The word "ignorant" (*agnoountōn*) later in the sentence shares the same root.

125. I.e., "scientific knowledge of the good-natured," as it would seem.

126. Lit. "characters." *Ēthē* might even be rendered "traits of moral character." See n. 10 to Letter Three.

127. One of the Argonauts, Lynceus was a figure from Greek mythology whose extraordinary keenness of vision became proverbial (see, e.g., Aristophanes, *Wealth* 210; Pindar, *Nemean* 10.61.3; Apollonius, *Argonautica* 1.153.5). There does not appear to be any tradition, however, holding that Lynceus could bestow sight upon others.

128. Or "in one speech" (*eni logōi*).

129. I.e., to the matter being investigated in this way; specifically, Plato is now discussing the investigation of what is "good-natured" (*eu pephukotos*). But *pragmatos* here may refer again to the "problem" discussed above at 340b–341c. See n. 101 above.

130. "Naturally attached" translates the adjective *prosphueis*, which suggests that something has grown together with or sprouted out of something else. It is closely related to the verb *prosphuō*, which appears only once in the *Letters* (313d2). The two passages should be compared.

131. *Ousias*; see n. 17 above [317c].

132. "Total occupation" translates *tribēs pasēs*, "every occupation" or even "every study." The noun is *tribēs*, directly related and very close in meaning to *diatribēs*, for which see n. 3 to Letter One. The literal meaning of the word is "a rubbing against," just as the participle *tribomena* ("has been rubbed against") occurring later in the sentence.

perceptions—and has been refuted in kindly refutations, those making use of questions and answers being without envy, then practical wisdom concerning each shines forth, as well as mind, straining to the utmost
344c extent of human power. Wherefore every man who is serious about the serious beings is far from[133] ever having written [about them], lest he should cast them down amid the envy and perplexity of human beings. In one word, one needs to recognize, on the basis of these things, that whenever one sees someone's writings that have been written—whether laws of a lawgiver or in any other things at all—these were not the most serious things to him, if indeed he himself was serious, but that they lie somewhere in the noblest region he possesses.[134] But if, even though these things were really taken seriously by him, he put them in writing,
344d "then indeed"—not "gods," but mortals—"themselves destroyed the wits in you."[135]

He who has followed along with this tale and wandering[136] will know well that, if either Dionysius or someone lesser or greater wrote something of the highest and first things concerning nature, he had in no way heard or learned soundly the things of which he wrote, according to my argument; for he would then have venerated them like I do, and he would not have dared to cast them out into dissonance and unseemli-
344e ness. For he wrote not for the sake of[137] reminders—for there is no danger that someone would forget it once one gets hold of it in one's soul; for of all things it is posited in the fewest words—rather, for the sake of a shameful love of honor, either as though he was setting it down himself or indeed as though he was a participant in an education of

133. "Is far from" translates the idiom *peri pollou dei*, literally "has need of much."

134. Lit. "the noblest [or most beautiful] region of those that are his."

135. The line Plato here cites and alters appears twice in Homer's *Iliad*: it is spoken once by Paris to Antenor (7.360), and once by Hector to Polydamas (12.234). In each case, the speaker is responding to a piece of advice that, while prudent and prescient, is unwelcome because it opposes his own passionate desire. Also in each case, it is not only this line that is spoken verbatim, but also the three preceding lines (but for the name of the person addressed), which together make up the first four lines of the speaker's rebuttal. The full four lines are:

> [Antenor/Polydamas], these things that you advise are no longer dear to me.
> You know how to think of another tale, better than this one.
> But if you are genuinely advising this in seriousness
> Then indeed, gods themselves destroyed the wits in you.

136. "Tale" is *muthōi*, for which "myth" is not an altogether inappropriate translation; note the appearance of the same word in the Homeric passage alluded to by Plato in the preceding sentence (n. 136 above). "Wandering" (*planōi*) could mean "digression" in this context.

137. *Charin*; see n. 60 above.

345a which he was not worthy, cherishing the reputation that comes of this participation.[138]

If, then, this is what Dionysius got from our single intercourse, then perhaps it is so. But *how* that ever came to be, "Zeus knows!" as the Theban says;[139] for I myself went through what I said only once, and never again thereafter. As to what has happened concerning these things, then, whoever cares to discover the way in which it ever happened needs to think of what is after this: whatever was the cause of our not thoroughly going through it for the second and the third time, and more often?
345b Does Dionysius, having heard only once, thus suppose he knows? And does he sufficiently know, either by having made the discovery himself or even having learned beforehand from others? Or does he suppose the things said were paltry? Or, thirdly, does he suppose that they are not on his level, but rather greater, and that he would not really be capable of living while taking care of practical wisdom and virtue? For if he supposes they are paltry, he'll be battling many witnesses who say the contrary, who would be altogether more authoritative judges concerning such things than Dionysius; but if he supposes that he has discovered or learned them—and that they are worthy with a view to the education of a
345c free soul—how, unless he is an amazing human being, could he ever have dishonored so nonchalantly the leader and sovereign authority regarding these things? But how he dishonored, I shall explain.

No long interval of time having passed after this, though he had previously been allowing Dion to possess his own things and to reap the profits, he would now no longer allow Dion's stewards to send his wealth to the Peloponnese, as though he had altogether forgotten his letter; for he claimed that it was not Dion's wealth but his son's, who
345d was his nephew and of whom he was therefore the guardian by law.[140] These were the things that had been done up to this point in time; so, when these things had come to be in this way, I myself saw Dionysius's

138. Accepting the one-letter variant (from *genomenēs* to *genomenēn*) found, not in the main text of the best manuscripts, but as an emendation in one and in the main text of a later, important manuscript. The other version would read "cherishing the reputation that belongs to the coming-to-be of this participation."

139. Plato writes this exclamation—in spirit something like "God only knows"—in the Theban dialect (*ittō* instead of *istō*, "may he know"). The exact same expression is used by Socrates's Theban companion Cebes in Plato's *Phaedo* (62a8), but its significance is otherwise unclear.

140. The words "stewards" and "guardian" in this sentence are effectively the same (*epitropos*). As Harward explains, "Dionysius now abandoned the assumption that Dion was merely on his travels (*v.* 338b1), and treated him as an exile, so that the guardianship of Dion's son passed into his own hands" (1932, 219n121).

desire for philosophy with precision, and it would have been permissible for me to be vexed, whether I wished to or not.

For it was already summer then and the time for the ships to sail out; and it seemed that I needed to be hard, not any more on Dionysius than
345e on myself and on those who had forced me to go for the third time into the strait by Scylla,

> so that I might once more measure back out the path to destructive Charybdis,[141]

and that I needed to say to Dionysius that it was impossible for me to stay, Dion having been thus trampled in the mud. But he was trying to reassure me and was begging me to stay, as he supposed that it would not go beautifully for him for me to go myself, as quickly as possible, as a messenger about such things. But as he wasn't persuading me, he said
346a he himself would prepare me a conveyance. For I was intending to set sail by embarking on the messenger ships,[142] as I had grown angry and was supposing that I needed to suffer whatever might come if I should be prevented, since it was entirely evident that I was committing no injustice, but was being done injustice; but he, seeing that I would not accede to staying put, contrived the following scheme to make me stay for the duration of that sailing season.

The day after these things, he came and gave me a speech of persua-
346b sion. "Let's me and you," he said, "get Dion and Dion's things out of the way and be rid of our frequent conflicts about them. On your account," he said, "I will do the following things for Dion. I request that he, taking what is his, dwell in the Peloponnese—not as an exile, however, but as one for whom it is possible to voyage here whenever it be so resolved in common by him, me, and you [pl] his friends. But these things are [conditional on] him not plotting against me; and you [pl], your [pl] intimates, and Dion's who are here are to become his guarantors in these things—let him render his assurance to you [pl]. As for the money that
346c he would receive, let it be deposited in the Peloponnese and at Athens among whoever seems good to you [pl], and let Dion reap the profits, but let him not come to have sovereign authority to make withdrawals without you [pl]. For I do not much trust in him that, if he should have the use of this money, he would come to be just concerning me—for it is

141. Homer, *Odyssey* 12.428.

142. It is not entirely clear what is meant by "messenger ships," but the phrase apparently refers to ships that came and departed at regular intervals.

no small amount—but I have rather come to trust in you and yours. See, then, if these things are agreeable to you, and stay for the year on these
346d terms; and then, when the season comes, go away and bring this money; and I know well that Dion will have a great deal of gratitude for you for accomplishing these things on his behalf."

When I heard this speech I was disgusted; nevertheless, after deliberating, I said that I would report my opinions about these things to him on the following day. These were the arrangements we made together at that time. Then after these things, when I came to be by myself, I was deliberating, very confused. First, the following speech led the way in
346e my deliberation: "Come now, if Dionysius intends to do nothing of the things he says, and if, when I leave, he should send a letter of persuasion to Dion—both doing so himself and directing many others of those with him to do so—saying what he now says to me, that he himself was willing, but that I was not willing, to do what he was proposing to me, but that I was taking altogether little account of Dion's affairs; and in addition to these things, if he were moreover not willing to send me out,
347a but, not even giving commands to any of the ship captains, he simply indicated to all that he did not wish for me to sail out—who then will be willing to lead me as a passenger on his ship as I set out from Dionysius's house?" For, in addition to the other bad things, I was then dwelling in the garden about his house, whence the porter would not be willing to let me go unless some instruction had been sent to him from Dionysius. "But if I should stay around for the year, I could send a letter to Dion relating these things, as well as the circumstances I am in and what I am doing; and then, if Dionysius should do something of the things he
347b says, the things done by me will not have been altogether ridiculous—for Dion's property, if one were to value it correctly, is perhaps not less than a hundred talents[143]—but if things turn out to be of such a sort as it is now starting to appear likely that they will, I am at a loss as to what I will do with myself; nevertheless, it is perhaps necessary, for this year anyway, to toil further and to attempt to frustrate by deeds the machinations of Dionysius."

It having been so resolved by me, on the following day I said to Dionysius, "I have resolved to stay. But I request," I said, "that you not hold me
347c

143. The Attic talent was both a measure of weight (about 57 pounds) and a monetary value corresponding to that same weight in silver. In the fourth century, one talent corresponded to something like nine years' worth of wages for a skilled laborer such as a carpenter (Engen 2004).

to be a sovereign authority over Dion, but that, together with me, you send {him a note clarifying}[144] the things that have now been resolved, and ask whether these things satisfy him. And if not, but he wishes for and requests some other things, for him to send a letter relating these things as quickly as possible—but you must in no way make changes to the things that concern him until then."

These things were spoken; upon these things we agreed, nearly just as they have been said now. The ships sailed out after this, and it was no
347d longer possible for me to sail—at which point, indeed, Dionysius remembered and said to me that half of the property needed to be Dion's and half his son's. He said he would sell it, and that once it was sold he would give half to me to take away and leave the other half to his child, for in this way it would be most just. Stricken by what had been said, I supposed it would be totally ridiculous to say anything further; nevertheless, I said that we ought to wait for the letter from Dion and send a letter back about these very things. But right after these things, he alto-
347e gether impetuously sold all the property, on whatever terms, in whatever manner, and to whomever he wanted, but to me he was uttering absolutely nothing about these things, and thus I, in turn, likewise was no longer conversing at all about Dion's affairs with him; for I supposed there was no longer anything more to do.

Up until these things, my coming to the aid of philosophy and of friends had come to be in this way. After these things, we were living,
348a I and Dionysius, such that I was looking outward like a bird longing to fly up and away,[145] and he was contriving some way that he could frighten me away[146] while giving back[147] nothing of what was Dion's. Nevertheless, we claimed to all Sicily that we were indeed comrades.

Dionysius now undertook, against the customs of his father, to reduce the wages of his senior mercenaries; but the soldiers, having been angered, gathered together in a group and declared they would not let

144. The words in braces are suggested in marginal additions to the best manuscripts.

145. With the phrase "longing to fly up and away," Plato employs an alliterative flourish: *pothōn pothen anaptesthai*.

146. Plato here uses not the common word for "frighten," *phobeō*, but the considerably rarer *anasobeō*. I owe to Keith Whitaker the observation that this verb or its root appears several times in Aristophanes with the sense "to shoo away birds."

147. "Give back" translates the participle *apodous*, a form of the same word translated "sell off" at 318a6 and b3. Consideration of the respective contexts seems to require these different translations, but the divergence is worth noting because the relevant passages of Letters Three and Seven contain parallel accounts of the same events, and in both cases this verb is used to refer to some part of what Dionysius did or claimed he would do with Dion's property.

348b it stand. He was undertaking to use force by barring the doors of the acropolis, but they threw themselves right at the walls, shouting some barbarian and warlike paean; and Dionysius, having come to be in great dread from this, conceded everything and still more to the peltasts[148] then gathered together. A certain speech quickly got around that Heraclides[149] was responsible for all these things that had happened. When he heard this, Heraclides took himself out of the way unseen, and Dionysius sought to seize him but, being at a loss, sent for Theodotes to come to the garden. And I myself happened to be walking about in the garden then, so while there are other things from their conversation which I do not know and was not hearing, what Theodotes said before me with a view to Dionysius I both know and remember.

348c

"Now Plato," he said, "I am persuading this Dionysius that, if I should come to be capable of bringing Heraclides here to us to speak about the charges that have now come to be against him, and if it be resolved that he needs not to dwell in Sicily, then I would request that he sail away to the Peloponnese, taking his son and his wife, to dwell there while in no way harming Dionysius, and reaping the profit from his property. I sent for him even before, and I will send for him again now; whether from the earlier summons, then, or from the present one, may he hearken to me; but I request and beg of Dionysius, if someone should encounter Heraclides either in the fields or within the city, that nothing else nasty happen to him, but that he be removed from the land until something else be resolved by Dionysius.

348d

348e

"Do you concede these things?" he said, speaking to Dionysius.

"I concede them," he said. "Not even if he should appear at your house will he suffer anything nasty contrary to the things that have now been said."

The day after this, Eurybius and Theodotes came to me in the evening in seriousness, both raising an amazing clamor, and Theodotes said, "Plato, you were present yesterday for the things to which Dionysius agreed, with me and you, concerning Heraclides."

"Of course," I said.

"Well," he said, "now peltasts are running around seeking to seize Heraclides, and there is a danger that he is somewhere around here. By all means," he said, "follow along with us to Dionysius."

349a

148. Light infantry troops named for their distinctive light shield (*peltē*).

149. On Heraclides, as well as Theodotes and Eurybius, who have parts in the story narrated here, see n. 28 to Letter Three.

So we departed and came before him, and the pair of them stood in silence, weeping, but I said, "These ones are frightened that you might do something new about Heraclides, contrary to the things agreed upon yesterday; for it seems to me that, having returned, he has been seen somewhere around here."

When he had heard this, he was inflamed and turned every sort of color one growing angry would emit; and Theodotes, falling before him
349b and taking his hand, wept and was supplicating him not to do any such thing; but I, interrupting and reassuring him, said "Take heart, Theodotes, for Dionysius will never dare to do anything else contrary to the things agreed upon yesterday."

And he looked at me and said, very tyrannically, "With *you*, I agreed to nothing, either small or large."

"By the gods," I said, "but you did, with respect to these things which he is now begging you not to do." And having said these things, I turned
349c around and departed. After these things, he was hunting for Heraclides while Theodotes was sending messengers to Heraclides directing him to flee. Dionysius sent out Tisias[150] and some peltasts, directing them to pursue. But Heraclides, it is said, reached the province of the Carthaginians, escaping by a small part of a day.

After this, the old plot of not giving back Dion's money seemed to Dionysius to hold out a persuasive argument for enmity against me.
349d And first, he sent me out of the acropolis, discovering as a pretext that the women needed to perform a certain ritual sacrifice for ten days in the garden in which I was dwelling;[151] so he commanded me to stay outside the acropolis at Archedemus's during this time.[152] While I was there, Theodotes sent for me, greatly vexed concerning the things that had been done then and blaming Dionysius; but when Dionysius heard
349e that I had gone to visit Theodotes, he made this yet another pretext, sister to the previous one, for his conflict with me, and he sent someone to ask me if I was really getting together with Theodotes upon his sending for me.

"Absolutely," I said.

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150. This Tisias is otherwise unknown.

151. This women-only festival was the Thesmaphoria, parodied by Aristophanes in his *Thesmaphoriasuzae*, which the Sicilian women celebrated as a ten-day festival as opposed to the three-day version put on by Athens and other Greek cities (Diodorus Siculus 5.4). It would have taken place in October (Harward 1932, 220n135).

152. On Archedemus, see n. 1 to Letter Two.

"Well then, [Dionysius] directed me," he said, "to explain to you that you are acting in no way nobly in always making more of Dion and Dion's friends than of him." These things were said, and he no longer sent for me to come back to his house, as though I was now clearly a friend of Theodotes and of Heraclides, but of him an enemy, and he supposed that I did not have goodwill toward him because Dion's money
350a was completely running out. After this, then, I was dwelling outside of the acropolis among the mercenaries. Among others, those of the rowers[153] who were from Athens, my fellow-citizens, came to me and reported that I had been slandered among the peltasts and that some were threatening that, if they caught me, they would kill me.

I contrive a salvation such as follows.[154] I send to Archytas and my other friends in Tarentum, explaining the circumstances in which I happen to be. They, furnishing some pretext of an embassy, send from their
350b city a thirty-oared ship and one of their own, Lamiscus,[155] who, when he came, begged Dionysius concerning my case, saying that I wished to go away and telling him to do in no manner otherwise. He agreed and, having given a travel allowance, sent me away. Of Dion's money, neither was I asking for any, nor did anyone give it back.

When I came to Olympia in the Peloponnese and caught up with Dion, who was a spectator at the games,[156] I reported to him the things that had happened. He, calling Zeus as his witness, straightaway gave
350c word to me and to my intimates and friends to prepare to take vengeance on Dionysius on account, in our case, of the cheating of guest-friends[157] (for so he said and thought), and in his own case, for an unjust casting out and exile. Having listened, I directed him to call upon my friends if they were willing. "But as for me," I said, "you, together with the others, by force, in a way, made me a sharer of meals, and a sharer of hearth, and a partner in sacred rites with Dionysius, who may have believed many of

153. *Tōn huperesiōn* can mean either "the servants" or "the rowers in the fleet." Harward opts for the latter reading with the following explanation: "The ships' crews here mentioned belonged to the navy of Dionysius. The ships which he kept permanently in commission would be manned by paid crews, and it is interesting to observe that some of the men were enlisted at Athens" (1932, 221n137). However, it is also possible that Plato is referring to Athenian members of the Syracusan servant class.

154. Plato adds liveliness to his narrative here by use of the historical present.

155. This Lamiscus is otherwise unknown.

156. See n. 2 to Letter Three.

157. The compound word *xenapatia*, "cheating of guest-friends," i.e., of *xenous* (see n. 12 to Letter Three), appears to be a Platonic coinage. At any rate, it does not appear anywhere but here in any extant text.

the slanderers saying that I, together with you, was plotting against him
350d and the tyranny—and nonetheless he did not kill me, but was restrained by shame.[158] At any rate, I am hardly of an age any longer to be joining in war with anyone; and you [pl] have me in common should you [pl] ever, being in some need of friendship with each other, wish to do some good; but for so long as you [pl] should desire to inflict evils, call upon others." I said these things having come to hate my wandering about Sicily and ill fortune; but they were unpersuaded,[159] and, not having been persuaded by my conversations,[160] they came to be responsible for all the evils that have now come to be for them, none of which would ever have
350e come to be, so far as the human things go at least, if Dionysius had given back to Dion his money or been altogether reconciled[161] with him—for I would have been easily holding Dion back both by wishing it and by the power I held with him[162]—but as it is they, having set out against one another, have had their fill of every evil.

351a And yet Dion held the very same wish that I myself would claim is needed, for me as for anyone else: whoever is measured concerning his own power and friends, and concerning his own city, would intend, by doing the greatest benefactions, to come into the greatest power and honors. But this would not be possible if someone were to make himself, his comrades, and his city rich by plotting and by bringing together conspirators, if he is poor and does not have control over himself, defeated
351b by cowardice in the face of pleasures; or if he, killing the possessors of property and calling these enemies, should carry away their money and encourage his accomplices and comrades to do whatever they must so that no one should accuse him, claiming to be poor. And it is the same if someone is honored by the city for doing benefactions for her by apportioning to the many the things of the few by means of measures passed

158. Lit. "stood in awe" or "acted with reverence" (*ēidesthē*); see n. 9 to Letter Six.

159. Or "they disobeyed" (*apeithountes*), just as "not having been persuaded" later in this sentence could also be "not having obeyed" (*ou peithomenoi*).

160. "By my conversations" (*dialexesin*) is the reading of the best manuscripts. Marginal comments in these, adopted in the main text of later manuscripts, suggest "[attempts at] reconciliation" (*diallaxesi*) instead of "conversations."

161. The word for "reconciled" here is *katēllagē*, which could even suggest "atonement" in this context; it is to be distinguished from *oikeiotēta*, "reconciliation," at 317e above (see n. 23 to Letter Three).

162. The phrase *tōi boulesthai kai tōi dunasthai* ("both [merely] by wishing [it] and by the power [I] held [with him]") is hard to translate. The latter of the two verbs here is elsewhere translated "to be capable," though it is of course also related to the noun *dunamis*, translated "power" throughout. A very literal translation that would fail to convey the sense would be "both by wishing and by being capable."

by majority vote, or, having come to the fore of a great city, which rules many lesser ones, if he should apportion the money of the smaller ones
351c to his own city not according to justice.[163] For neither Dion nor anyone else ever voluntarily goes for power that is accursed[164] for him and his tribe[165] for all time, but rather for a regime with the establishment of the most just and best laws to come to be through not even the fewest deaths and murders.[166]

These things Dion was now doing, having preferred[167] the suffering of impious deeds above the doing of them, yet being very careful not to suffer them; nevertheless he stumbled, having come to the peak of his
351d overcoming of his enemies—suffering nothing amazing. For, concerning the impious, a pious human being, both moderate and sensible,[168] would never be wholly deceived concerning the soul of such as they—but perhaps it would not be amazing if he should suffer the experience[169] of a good pilot: a coming storm would not altogether escape his notice, but the extraordinary[170] and unexpected magnitude of a storm could escape his notice and, having escaped it, inundate him by force. The same thing also brought down Dion; for it hardly escaped his notice that the ones
351e who brought him down were evil, but the height of unlearnedness[171] to which they had attained, and of the rest of depravity and gluttony, did escape his notice,[172] and having been brought down by it, he lies, having engulfed Sicily in ten-thousandfold sorrow.

352a The things that I counsel after what has now been discussed have pretty much already been spoken by me—and let them have been spoken.

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163. Or "not according to a just penalty" or "a just judgment" (*mē kata dikēn*).

164. See n. 70 above.

165. Or "family" (*genei*); see n. 8 above.

166. Marginal emendations in the best manuscripts suggest the word "murders" (*phonōn*) should instead be "exiles" (*phugōn*).

167. Lit. "having honored more highly" (*protimēsas*).

168. "Moderate" and "sensible" here translate two words closely related in the Greek, *sōphrōn* and *emphrōn*. See n. 15 to Letter Three.

169. "Suffer" and "experience" here translate virtually the same word; the phrase is *pathos pathoi*. There is no word in this sentence related to *empeiron*, for which I usually reserve the word "experience."

170. Lit. "beyond what is ordained," "inauspicious" (*exaision*).

171. See n. 72 above.

172. Accepting the emendation offered by a second hand in one of the best manuscripts and preferred by Burnet and Souilhé. Note, however, that Souilhé mistakenly claims that his preferred reading also appears in the main text of the best manuscripts, which it does not. The main text reads *etuchon* instead of *elathon*, which might be translated "but the height of unlearnedness to which they had attained, and of the rest of depravity and gluttony, did happen [to escape his notice]."

As regards those things for the sake of which I took back up my second arrival in Sicily, it seemed to me that they necessarily needed to be discussed because of the strangeness and unreasonableness of the things that happened. And if what has now been said appeared rather reasonable to someone, and seemed to him to provide sufficient pretexts for the things that happened, then what has now been said would have been spoken in a measured and sufficient manner for us.